



Revenues and their Sources

[Capital Volume 3, Part 7](#), Revenues and their Sources

The last part of the last book of Capital begins as Volume 1 ended, with a reminder that capital is not a thing, but it is a relationship. In Part 1 of our chosen text, [Chapter 48, The Trinity Formula](#) (download linked below) Marx writes:

“Capital, land, labour! However, capital is not a thing, but rather a definite social production relation, belonging to a definite historical formation of society, which is manifested in a thing and lends this thing a specific social character. Capital is not the sum of the material and produced means of production. Capital is rather the means of production transformed into capital, which in

themselves are no more capital than gold or silver in itself is money. It is the means of production monopolised by a certain section of society, confronting living labour-power as products and working conditions rendered independent of this very labour-power, which are personified through this antithesis in capital..."

Shortly afterwards, Marx turns to a summary of the illusory and impossible conception of the same relationship as seen by self-serving "vulgar" bourgeois economists, starting like this:

*"Vulgar economy actually does no more than interpret, systematise and defend in doctrinaire fashion the conceptions of the agents of bourgeois production who are entrapped in bourgeois production relations. It should not astonish us, then, that vulgar economy feels particularly at home in the estranged outward appearances of economic relations in which these prima facie absurd and perfect contradictions appear and that these relations seem the more self-evident the more their internal relationships are concealed from it, although they are understandable to the popular mind. But all science would be superfluous if the outward appearance and the essence of things directly coincided. Thus, vulgar economy has not the slightest suspicion that the **trinity** which it takes as its point of departure, namely, **land** — rent, **capital** — interest, **labour** — wages or the price of labour, are prima facie three impossible combinations."*

Later in this paragraph (section III of the chapter), Marx refers to Volume 1 (“Book 1”) and contrasts the irrational bourgeois concept of value with the true understanding of surplus value.

To finish by returning to Engels’ introductory remarks: Yes, Capital Volume 3 is important. It is not superfluous. Volume 3 is directly helpful in the current circumstances of “Global Economic Meltdown” and “Debt Crisis”. But Volume 3 does not render Volume 1 redundant. On the contrary, Volume 3 relies upon and leans upon Volume 1 and constantly confirms Volume 1, throughout.

The last Chapter of Capital Volume 3 is [Chapter 52, “Classes”](#), and it ends: “[Here the manuscript breaks off.]”

Engels provided a supplement to Volume 3 which can be found on MIA, [here](#).

Picture: A representation of the Christian “Holy Trinity”. “*Pater*”, “*filius*” and “*spiritus sanctus*” are Father, Son and holy spirit (Holy Ghost), and “*deus*” is God. “*Est*” means “is”, and “*non est*” means “is not”. These are “*prima facie*” three impossible combinations. If all are God, then it follows in logic that all must be the same as each other; but the diagram says they are not the same as each other. This is a logical “*non sequitur*” (i.e. “it does not follow”).

Marx is not challenging Christianity. Christians may, as some of them do, accept the Trinity as an article of faith, while

others may say (as do the Jesuits, for example) that the Trinity may be a mystery, but we must constantly strive to understand it.

Marx is rather saying that the Christian Trinity is not reconcilable by logic, and the bourgeois Trinity of capital, land, and labour likewise does not constitute three of a kind, and, like the Christian Trinity, this bourgeois Trinity it does not constitute a logical unity.

- The above is to introduce the original reading-text: [Capital Volume 3, Chapter 48, The Trinity Formula](#).
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